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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002886

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGERFO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/2016
TAGS: PREL ASEC CASC KPAL KWBG PHUM PTER
SUBJECT: MGGZ01 - ISRAELI GAZA INCURSION - JERUSALEM JULY
11 SITREP

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) IDF operations are continuing in central and southern Gaza. IAF air strikes on suspected Palestinian militants July 10-11 resulted in nine Palestinian deaths. One air strike near Beit Hanoun targeting gunmen instead struck Palestinian civilians, killing four. Israeli media reported that PM Olmert intends to intensify operations in Gaza; meanwhile, Hamas political bureau chief Khaled Mish'al told reporters in Damascus July 10 that Gilad Shalit's release would come only through a prisoner exchange and added that a renewal of the "tahdiyyah" (calm) required an end to Israeli military operations. Post is making preparations for a second departure of American citizens from Gaza, tentatively scheduled for July 15. Crossings other than the Nahal Oz fuel transfer station remain closed.

Military Developments

¶2. (SBU) IDF operations continued in Gaza, July 10-11, resulting in nine Palestinians killed, including four Palestinian civilians near Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza during an IAF air strike on a vehicle transporting gunmen. Elsewhere in Gaza, IAF planes fired missiles toward gunmen near the Karni Crossing, killing two and wounding five others. Among those killed was a member of the Hamas military wing. Two PIJ gunmen were killed near Khan Younis from Israel tank fire. Another Palestinian died July 10 from injuries sustained in an earlier incident. Fatah and Hamas gunmen clashed in the early hours of July 11 in Gaza City. Three Fatah gunmen were kidnapped and roughed up in the incident, but later released.

¶3. (SBU) According to Israeli press reports, the IAF July 11 struck a bridge near Beit Hanoun to prevent militants from transporting rockets into areas where they have been previously launched rockets into Israel. There were no reported injuries from this attack. Israeli media also reported that PM Olmert, following meetings with senior Israeli defense officials, July 10 decided to intensify IDF operations in Gaza. IDF operations remain concentrated in areas between the Karni Crossing and the eastern sectors of Gaza City, and in the south around Rafah and Gaza's Dahaniya airport.

¶4. (SBU) A total of five Qassam rockets were launched against Israeli targets on July 10. There were no reported injuries or damage from these attacks. At least one Qassam

rocket was fired into the Western Negev at 1200 hours local July 11; there were no reported injuries or damage. Palestinian sources report that a 10-year-old Palestinian girl sustained severe injuries on July 10 by a Qassam rocket that struck her house in Beit Lahiya.

¶ 15. (SBU) In the West Bank, the IDF conducted raids into Bethlehem, Nablus, and Hebron overnight July 10-11, arresting 13 Palestinians suspected of belonging to Hamas. The IDF also arrested two Palestinians at the Beit Iba checkpoint near Nablus. Both PIJ and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed that they had successfully fired a rocket on the morning of July 11 from the Jenin area towards Israel; the IDF has disputed this claim.

Political Developments

¶ 16. (SBU) During a July 10 press conference in Damascus, Hamas political chief Khaled Mish'al stated that Gilad Shalit's release will come only through the release of Palestinian prisoners. Mish'al blamed the lack of progress from international mediation efforts on Israel's refusal to commit to a prisoner exchange. (Note: There are several reported mediation efforts underway by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, France, and Russia. Palestinian sources claim that a Finnish hostage negotiator is also mediating between Hamas and the Government of Israel. End note.) Mish'al expressed support for the resumption of the "tahdiyyah" (calm), but insisted that a cessation of violence also required an end to Israeli military activities.

¶ 17. (SBU) Palestinian President Abbas departed Ramallah the evening of July 10 for meetings with Jordanian Government officials in Amman. Abbas is expected to return to Ramallah on July 11.

AMCIT Update

¶ 18. (C) Post is making preparations for a second departure of American citizens from Gaza, tentatively scheduled for July 15. Post estimates that a minimum of 80 will seek to leave Gaza.

Humanitarian Update

¶ 19. (SBU) Crossings: Karni/al-Mintar commercial crossing remains closed, as of 1100 local on July 11. (Note: Karni was last open for four hours on July 6. End note.) PalTrade Gaza-based official Mohammad Skaik told ConGen ECON Specialist July 11 that he has heard reports that the Karni/al-Mintar crossing could be reopened later in the day July 11 with Presidential Guard members manning the crossing, not the regular employees. (Comment: We have no further confirmation of this. End Comment.)

¶ 110. (SBU) The Nahal Oz fuel transfer station was operational July 10 and is reported to be open July 11. USAID Gaza-based field staff reported the following amounts of fuel were delivered into Gaza July 10:

-- 420,000 liters of diesel;
-- 80,000 liters of gasoline; and
-- 120 tons of cooking gas.

¶ 111. (SBU) The Kerem Shalom and Sufa crossings remain closed. The Rafah passenger crossing remains closed. USAID staff report that a team from Catholic Relief Services will visit the Egyptian side of the crossing July 11 to assess the condition of the estimated 700 people who are in the no man's land between the Egyptian and Palestinian sides of the crossing. The Palestinian daily al-Hayat al-Jadid reported

July 11 that three Palestinians have died so far while waiting for entry into Gaza.

¶12. (SBU) Electricity: According to USAID Gaza-based field staff, the damaged medium tension feeder line from Israel into Gaza at the Karni/al-Mintar crossing was repaired July 10, thereby restoring 11 MW of electricity to Gaza City. The feeder line is one of four which supplies Gaza City; another feeder line damaged July 10 and has not yet been repaired. Residents in the Rafah governorate are receiving electricity for 12 hours each day from the repaired feeder line from Israel.

WALLES